

October 19, 2007

Dear Facility Owner:

I am writing to inform you of a health issue that recently has received considerable attention in the media and is understandably a concern for those active in swimming pools or spas, health clubs, recreation facilities, participating on athletic teams, etc. Individuals who use common equipment, locker rooms or showers may be concerned about acquiring a bacterial infection of the skin that is resistant to the more common forms of antibiotics.

*Staphylococcus aureus*, often referred to simply as "staph," are bacteria commonly carried on the skin or in the nose of healthy people. The infection of concern is called Methicillin-Resistant Staph Aureus or MRSA. These skin conditions most commonly look like an infected pimple or boil and can worsen to include redness, warmth, swelling, pain, and discharge. Sometimes, it can be mistaken as a spider or insect bite. However, MRSA bacteria also can spread from the initial infection site, causing more serious infections. MRSA skin infections are becoming more common, including occurring in otherwise healthy people.

Community Associated MRSA infections are termed CA-MRSA, which is spread by skin-to-skin contact, contact with drainage from the nose of a person infected, or contact with contaminated objects such as razors, soap, clothing, or towels. Another factor that has been associated with the spread of MRSA is openings on the skin, such as cuts or abrasions.

You and your customers, patrons, and members can enjoy your activities while protecting yourselves from MRSA infections by following the good hygiene practices outlined on the attached chart. These practices can be summarized as:

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Keep cuts and scrapes cleaned and covered with a bandage until healed
- Avoid contact with other people's wounds and bandages
- Avoid sharing personal items, such as towels or razors
- Wipe surfaces of exercise equipment with a sanitizer before and after use
- Maintain proper pool pH and chemical levels, as required by the health department

Finally, remember that early treatment of suspected MRSA is important. Therefore, if you are concerned about a wound or sore, consult your health care provider.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ulder J. Tillman, MD". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ulder J. Tillman, M.D., MPH  
Montgomery County Health Officer

## **Key Prevention Steps to prevent the spread of MRSA**

- 1. Clean hands regularly with soap and water or alcohol-based hand gel (if hands are not visibly soiled). Always clean hands immediately after touching infected skin or any item that has come in direct contact with a draining wound.**
- 2. Maintain good general hygiene with regular bathing.**
- 3. Keep wounds that are draining covered with clean, dry, bandages.**
- 4. Do not share personal care items such as towels, clothing, bedding, bar soap, razors, and athletic equipment that touches the skin.**
- 5. Launder clothing after each use and dry thoroughly.**
- 6. Skin infections or wounds should be kept covered with a clean, dry bandage at all times. If that is not possible an individual with a skin infection or wound should not participate in activities resulting in skin to skin contact with other persons (such as athletic activities) until the wound is healed or infection resolved.**
- 7. Clean equipment and other environmental surfaces with which multiple individuals have bare skin contact with an over the counter detergent/disinfectant that specifies *Staphylococcus aureus* on the product label and is suitable for the type of surface being cleaned.**  
**(Note: A dilute solution of one part household bleach and ten parts water is appropriate [1:10 solution]).**
- 8. Ensure a halide residual (e.g., chlorine, bromine) recommended for swimming pools, spa pools and other basins or tanks used for immersion by multiple patrons.**

(Adapted from Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)